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# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



## BACKGROUND

The bateys were originally established as sugar-cane worker camps throughout the Dominican Republic, and have evolved into permanent communities with weakened links to formal employment in the sugar sector. Approximately 250 public bateys still exist on lands owned by the Dominican Consejo Estatal de Azúcar (CEA). The batey population is young: an estimated 29% are under 5 years old and 55% under 15 years old, and the inhabitants are poor.

The historical and structural marginalization of batey residents has resulted in very poor living conditions, with problematic access to quality education, public services, and health care. As a result of unhygienic and cramped living conditions, the lack of access to health services, and risk-taking behavior, batey residents suffer high rates of persistent health problems including diarrhea, respiratory problems, hypertension, and HIV/AIDS. Limited access to education and generally poor educational quality have further exacerbated batey residents' economic and social marginalization. Bateys also tend to have very poor household and community infrastructure. Most lack regular access to potable water, effective sanitation infrastructure, communal space, and access to hurricane-safe shelters.

The most common economic activity for batey residents is to work as day laborers on sugar plantations or other farms for low wages, as bateys are usually located in isolated areas with few other possibilities for employment or income generation. This is particularly the case for women. However, many batey residents are chronically unemployed or underemployed, while others leave their communities in search of work opportunities.

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## Batey Community Development Project

**USAID GOAL:** Help the people of the Dominican Republic build and sustain a democratic, well-governed state that responds to the needs of Dominicans, reduces widespread poverty and conducts itself responsibly in the international system

## WHAT IS USAID DOING IN THIS AREA?

USAID through implementing partners Save the Children USA, Save the Children – Dominican Republic (FUDECO) and Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana (MUDE) are working to improve the living conditions lives of batey residents through activities that include infrastructure improvements in housing, water and sanitation, as well as education and community health interventions. The program is also mobilizing community participation and developing income generating activities to ensure not only sustainable social programming, but also improved livelihoods for batey residents.

The first phase of the project is working in eight bateys located in eastern Dominican Republic. Project activities fall under three basic areas:

### Health

USAID and its implementing partners are working closely with the Secretariat of Health, Consejo Estatal de Azúcar, and other stakeholders to reduce infant mortality and morbidity, improve access to health and nutrition services, and foster knowledge and improved behavior related to health, nutrition, hygiene, and HIV/AIDS and STI prevention.

### Education

USAID in close conjunction with the Secretariat of Education (SOE), the Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnico Profesional, parents, students, and teachers is working to improve access to high-quality education and extra-curricular activities. The program places emphasis on the early grades (1-4) to ensure that children have a positive and successful first experience in school with the goal of increasing school attendance, performance, and primary school completion rates.

### Water/Sanitation and Shelter

The project is also, in collaboration with CEA and the Instituto Nacional de Aguas Potables y Acantarillados, and in coordination with the Asociación Dominicana de Mitigación de Desastres, the Centro de Operaciones de Emergencia, and Dominican Defensa Civil, improving community infrastructure including high-quality potable water systems, sanitation facilities, emergency shelters, and housing. All activities involve the communities in project selection and implementation and will be carried out in consultation with CEA.

## WHAT DOES USAID INTEND TO ACHIEVE?

- Improved access to quality, basic maternal and child health services through qualified community providers;
- Increased access to basic education through school infrastructure improvements and adequate equipment and/or materials;
- Improved community access to safe and sustainable water systems and sanitation infrastructure;
- Emergency preparedness plans for each batey developed with the active involvement of community members, including children, youth, women, and community leaders.